

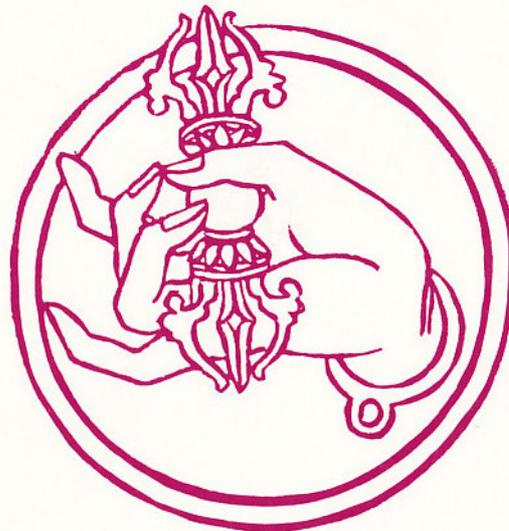
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THE BODHISATTVA IDEAL

1

The Awakening
of the Bodhi Heart



Series No. 3
FEBRUARY 1986

Mitrata 58 February 1986

Cover Symbol:

This issue features the *mudrā* of Bodhisattva Vajrapani, the 'Holder of the Vajra', who is the embodiment of spiritual energy. His right hand is shown here holding a *vajra*, a diamond/thunderbolt, the symbol of the energy which breaks through all barriers.

THE BODHISATTVA IDEAL

2. The Awakening of the Bodhi Heart

Part 1

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* Indicates refer to Glossary

Editorial

Winter is upon us now and from my window I can see a fine sprinkling of snow on the ground. It covers the roots which will lie dormant in the earth until the Spring. In dependence upon conditions new life will emerge

Seventeen years ago the Venerable Sangharakshita started a new Movement — the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order. He set up the conditions for the emergence of new life. New life in the form of Buddhists; and, as the Bodhisattva Ideal is the Buddhist Ideal, in the form of Bodhisattvas. A Bodhisattva is one who strives for Enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. One becomes a Bodhisattva upon the awakening of the Bodhi Heart, upon the arising of the Bodhicitta. How does the Bodhicitta arise? When? Where? Where from? Can it be lost? What *is* the Bodhicitta? These are questions which will be explored in *Mitrata* 58 and 59.

The arising of the Bodhicitta within us has been compared to the finding of a priceless jewel in a dunghill, at night, by a blind man. It sounds rather far-fetched, not to say impossible! But the would-be Bodhisattva must believe in the impossible.

The thousand-armed form of Avalokiteśvara is the symbol of the Western Buddhist Order. The Venerable Sangharakshita suggests that in aspiring to become Bodhisattvas we each work to become an arm of Avalokiteśvara. The arms are bound together in co-operation, linked to the heart of the Bodhisattva, sharing in and expressing, in their own individual ways, the one Bodhicitta. They are arms which have their roots in the sky.

Very recently, in Tuscany, India and Norfolk forty or so men and women went for refuge to the Three Jewels and devoted themselves to becoming arms of Avalokiteśvara. There are now nearly 300 members of the Western Buddhist Order. What will happen when there are one thousand? Perhaps each arm will develop a thousand hands, and then each hand could take on a thousand fingers. If we can open up to the Transcendental we are no longer limited. New life, infinite activity, infinite expansion will be possible.

SRIMALA

Lecture

Last week we addressed ourselves to the question: Who or what is a Bodhisattva? We saw that a Bodhisattva — as the term itself suggests — is one who seeks to gain Enlightenment; is one whose whole being, in fact, is orientated towards Enlightenment. We then saw that a Bodhisattva is further defined as, 'one who seeks to gain Enlightenment not for his own sake only, but for the sake of all sentient beings'. Now, there arises a most important, practical question: How does one become a Bodhisattva? In other words, how does one embark upon the actual realization of this sublime, spiritual ideal? This is where we come in this week. The answer to this question is quite short and straightforward, but it demands considerable explanation. The traditional answer to the question is: one becomes a Bodhisattva upon the awakening of the Bodhi Heart. 'The Awakening of the Bodhi Heart' is, of course, our subject for this week.

Let us go back for a moment to the original Sanskrit term. This is *bodhicitta-utpāda*. Bodhi means, as we saw last week, 'spiritual Enlightenment', or 'spiritual awakening', (consisting in the seeing of Reality face to face). *Citta* means 'mind', it means 'thought', it means 'consciousness', it means also 'heart'; it means all of these things. *Utpāda* means simply 'arising' or, more poetically, 'awakening'.

This term, *bodhicitta-utpāda*, is one of the most important terms in the whole field of Buddhism, certainly in the whole field of the Mahayana. It is usually translated into English as 'the arising of the thought of Enlightenment', but let me say at once that this is exactly what it is not. In a sense you could hardly have a worse translation. It's not a thought about Enlightenment at all. We can think about Enlightenment as much as we like. We can think about it, read about it, talk about it. 'Enlightenment is both Wisdom and Compassion' — the words come very glibly from our tongues, and we think we know all about Enlightenment. We are thinking about Enlightenment perhaps even now. The thought about Enlightenment undoubtedly has arisen in our minds as we sit here, but the Bodhicitta has not arisen -- we haven't become transformed into Bodhisattvas. The Bodhicitta is something very much more than a thought about Enlightenment. Guenther translates it as 'Enlightened Attitude'. I personally sometimes translate it (I translated it like this in *The Three Jewels*¹) as the 'Will to Enlightenment'. In the title of tonight's talk we speak of it as the 'Bodhi Heart'. Although all these alternative translations are considerably better than the 'thought of Enlightenment', none of them is really satisfactory. (This isn't altogether the fault of the English language. We may say it's the fault of language itself. We might even say that 'Bodhicitta' is a very unsatisfactory term for the Bodhicitta.) The Bodhicitta is, in fact, not a mental-state (or -activity, or -function) at all. It is certainly not a 'thought' (not a thought which you or I can entertain). If we think of Enlightenment, that is not the Bodhicitta; the Bodhicitta has nothing to do with thought. It is not even an 'act of will', if by that I mean my personal will. It is not even 'being conscious', if by that I mean my being conscious — or your being conscious — of the fact that there is such a thing as 'Enlightenment'. The Bodhicitta is none of these things.

We may say that the Bodhicitta basically represents the manifestation, even the irruption, within us, of something transcendental. In traditional terms — and I am thinking now of Nāgārjuna's exposition of the Bodhicitta in a little work which he wrote on that subject² (a very short but very profound work) — the Bodhicitta is said to be not included in the 'Five *Skandhas*'. This is a very significant statement indeed. It gives us a tremendous clue to the nature of the Bodhicitta. This statement of Nāgārjuna, representing the best Mahayana tradition, requires a great deal of pondering.

Some of you might not have encountered these 'Five *Skandhas*' before. *Skandha* is another of those untranslatable terms. It is usually translated as 'aggregate', or 'confection', or something equally

unsatisfactory. It is really untranslatable. It literally means 'the trunk of a tree', but that doesn't get us very far. However, the 'Five *Skandhas*' are one of the basic, doctrinal categories of Buddhism. Whether it's Pali literature, Sanskrit literature, Tibetan, Chinese, over and over again you get references to the 'Five Skandhas', the 'Five Aggregates', or, as Dr. Conze³ delights to translate the term, the 'Five Heaps' (which doesn't help us very much either). Let us refer back to these 'Five *Skandhas*' a little, so that we are quite sure where we are, and what we are trying to ponder on.

The first of the 'Five *Skandhas*' is *rūpa*. *Rūpa* means 'bodily form', it means anything perceived through the senses. Secondly there is *vedanā*. *Vedanā* means 'feeling', it means 'emotion' — positive, negative, pleasant, painful, etc. Thirdly there is *saṃjñā*, which is, very roughly, 'perception'. (Sometimes it is translated 'sensation', but it seems that 'sensation' is a more suitable translation for *vedanā*.) *Saṃjñā* is the recognition of something as that particular thing. When you say, "that's a clock", that is *saṃjñā*; you've recognized it as that particular thing, you've identified it, pointed it out, labelled it. Fourthly, the *saṃskāras*. This term is more difficult still to translate. By some German scholars it is usually translated as 'steering forces'. We may say, very roughly indeed, 'volitional activities', i.e. acts of will, etc. Fifthly, *viññāna*, which is 'consciousness': consciousness through the five physical senses, and through the mind at various levels.

So these are the 'Five *Skandhas*': *rūpa* (material form), *vedanā* (feeling, emotion), *saṃjñā* (perception), *saṃskāras* (volitional activities), *viññāna* (consciousness). I must warn you that if you want to make anything of Buddhist thought at all, especially on its more technical side (its philosophy, its metaphysics), you must know these 'Five *Skandhas*' 'inside out', as it were. You must be able to reel them off, and know what you are talking about, otherwise you won't get very far with Buddhist philosophy. This, however, is just by the way — we are not dealing so much now with Buddhist philosophy.

In Buddhist thought, generally speaking, these 'Five *Skandhas*' are regarded as exhausting our entire psychophysical existence. In the entire range of our psychophysical existence, on all levels, there's nothing — no thought, no feeling, no aspect of our physical existence — which is not included under one or another of these 'Five *Skandhas*'. This is why, at the very beginning of the *Heart Sutra*, the text says that the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara,⁴ coursing in the profound Perfection of Wisdom, looked down on the world (looked down on conditioned existence), and saw Five Heaps (Five *Skandhas*). That is just what he saw. No more than that. He saw that the whole of psychophysical conditioned existence consists of just these five things; nothing occurs, nothing takes place, nothing exists, on the conditioned level of existence (the *saṃskṛta** level) which cannot be included under one or another of these 'Five *Skandhas*'.

But the Bodhicitta is not included in the 'Five *Skandhas*'. The 'Five *Skandhas*' comprise all that is of this world, so when we say that the Bodhicitta is not included in the 'Five *Skandhas*', it means that it is something altogether out of this world, something transcendental. It is not a thought, nor a volition, nor an idea, nor a concept, but — if we must use words at all — it is a profound, spiritual (read 'transcendental') experience: an experience which re-orientates our entire being.

Perhaps I can make this rather obscure matter clearer with the help of a comparison — and it is *only* a comparison — from the Christian tradition. You can imagine someone in a Christian context talking about 'thinking of God'. When you talk about 'thinking of God', even if you are a pious churchgoing person, it doesn't mean very much — you just think about God. You might think of God as a beautiful old gentleman seated in the clouds, or you might think of God as Pure Being, Knowledge, Wisdom, etc. But 'thinking about God' would be just thinking about God. You wouldn't describe it as a spiritual experience, or as a profound experience of any sort. Suppose, however, you speak of 'the descent of the Holy Spirit', this would be a very different thing indeed. Thinking about God is one thing, but having the Holy Spirit descend upon you, and

into you, so that you are filled by the Holy Spirit, is a quite different thing.

So it is just the same in the case of 'thinking about Enlightenment' (or the 'thought of Enlightenment') on the one hand, and the actual arising of the Bodhicitta on the other. If the thought of Enlightenment is analogous to thinking about God, the arising of the Bodhicitta is analogous to the descent upon you — in full force, as it were — of the Holy Spirit. Now this comparison is just for the purpose of illustration — if possible, illumination. There's no question of equating these two different sets of doctrinal and spiritual concepts. I am concerned only to try to make clear the nature of the difference between thinking about Enlightenment and the arising of the Bodhicitta. The Bodhicitta is not just a thought about Enlightenment, but is a profound spiritual experience, even a profound, spiritual, transcendental 'entity'.

Not only is the Bodhicitta transcendental, but the Bodhicitta is not individual. This is another point that Nāgārjuna makes. We speak of the Bodhicitta as arising in this person or that person, and one might then therefore think that there were in existence a number of Bodhicittas — apparently a glorious plurality of Bodhicittas — arising in different people, making them all Bodhisattvas. In fact, it isn't so at all. Different thoughts (even if they are thoughts of the same thing) may arise in different people. But just as the Bodhicitta is not a 'thought' of Enlightenment, it is not an individual thing — it is not anybody's individually — so there is no plurality of Bodhicittas arising in different people. *Your* thought of Enlightenment is *your* thought of Enlightenment, *my* thought of Enlightenment is *my* thought of Enlightenment; there are many thoughts. But *your* Bodhicitta is *my* Bodhicitta, and *my* Bodhicitta is *your* Bodhicitta; there is only one Bodhicitta.

The Bodhicitta is only one, and individuals in whom the Bodhicitta is said to have arisen participate in that one Bodhicitta, or manifest that one Bodhicitta, in varying degrees. The Mahayana writers bring in that very well-worn, but still very beautiful, illustration of the moon. (I don't know whether it is full moon day tonight. I think perhaps it's tomorrow. But we have outside, as you probably noticed as you came along, a very, very beautiful, almost full, moon, shining in the clear blue sky, with just one or two stars in attendance, as it were.) This old Buddhist simile tells us that the Bodhicitta is like the moon (like, if you like, the full moon). The Bodhicitta is reflected, as it were, in different people (i.e. it arises in different people) just as the moon is reflected variously in different bodies of water. There are many reflections, but only one moon; in the same way, many manifestations, but one Bodhicitta.

Now, though we used the expression 'reflection', which is a bit static, we are not to think of the Bodhicitta in purely static terms. What is known in the Mahayana tradition as the 'Absolute Bodhicitta' — the Bodhicitta in its Absolute aspect, outside space and time — is identical with Reality itself. Being identical with Reality, the Absolute Bodhicitta is beyond change, or rather, is beyond the opposition between change and non-change. But this doesn't hold good of what is known in the tradition as the 'relative Bodhicitta'. The relative Bodhicitta is, as it were, an active force at work. This is why, as I said a little while ago, I prefer, personally, if I have to translate the term 'Bodhicitta', to speak of it as the 'Will to Enlightenment' (bearing in mind that one is speaking of the relative, as distinct from the Absolute, Bodhicitta). This Will to Enlightenment though, is not an act of will of any individual. The Bodhicitta is not something which *I* will. Just as it is not *my* thought, it's not *my* will. The Bodhicitta is no more an act of anybody's individual will than it is anybody's individual thought. We might, in fact — though here we have rather to grope for words — think of the Bodhicitta as a sort of 'cosmic will'. (I don't like to use this word 'will', but there's really no other.) We might think of the Bodhicitta as a sort of 'cosmic will' at work, if you like, in the universe, in the direction of what we can only think of as universal redemption: the liberation, the Enlightenment, ultimately, of all sentient beings.

We may even think of the Bodhicitta as a sort of 'spirit of Enlightenment', immanent in the world, and leading individuals to higher and ever higher degrees of spiritual perfection. This being the case it is clear that individuals do not possess the Bodhicitta. If you possess it, it's not the Bodhicitta (it's something else; it's your own thought or idea); the Bodhicitta — the transcendental, non-individual, cosmic Bodhicitta — you've missed. Individuals do not possess the Bodhicitta. We may say that it is the Bodhicitta that possesses individuals. And those of whom the Bodhicitta 'takes possession' (in whom this Bodhicitta arises) become what we call 'Bodhisattvas'. They live for the sake of Enlightenment; they strive to actualize, for the benefit of all, the highest potentialities that the universe contains.

So much, then, for the Bodhicitta. Very much more could be said about it. Some of the Mahayana sutras in particular, are never tired of singing the praises of the Bodhicitta. I remember that a few years ago, when I was in Kalimpong, I was compiling a book on the whole field of Buddhist canonical literature.⁵ And I came, amongst other things, to the Mahayana sutras, and among other sutras to the *Gaṇḍavyūha*.⁶ I wanted to quote just a few verses of what the *Gaṇḍavyūha* said in one place about the Bodhicitta. And, believe it or not, there were hundreds and hundreds of clauses, and hundreds and hundreds of illustrations, comparing the Bodhicitta to this, comparing it to that, comparing it to a gold mine, comparing it to the sun, comparing it to the moon, comparing it to everything. You got the impression — after going through this vast array of similes and comparisons — that, for the Mahayana author of the sutra (traditionally, the Buddha), the Bodhicitta was just everything. It was hymned and it was praised almost as though it were a sort of deity. You certainly didn't get the impression of someone's thought or idea. You got the impression, rather, of something vast, something cosmic, something sublime, which descends into, and penetrates, and possesses, people who are receptive to it — not anything individual, not anything limited in any way. So the Mahayana sutras (not only the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, but many other sutras) sing the praises of the Bodhicitta inexhaustibly.

But tonight we have no more time to say anything more on the subject of the Bodhicitta, so this must suffice for the present. A further question arises for our consideration, to which we now have to turn. We have understood what a Bodhisattva is, we have understood how one becomes a Bodhisattva through the arising within one of this glorious Bodhicitta, now the question arises: How does the Bodhicitta itself arise? This is a very mysterious matter. The Mahayana sutras supply one of their unfailing similes. They say that the arising of the Bodhicitta within us is like a blind man finding a priceless jewel on a dunghill at night. It is so wonderful, it is so unexpected — who would think that a blind man just poking his way round the dunghill in the middle of the night would find a priceless jewel? So, in the same way, who would have thought that in our case, living as we are in the midst of the world — earning our living, raising our families, going along to meditation classes once a week — in us this Bodhicitta should ever have arisen? This is the simile that the Mahayana sutras give.

But, wonderful as it is, unexpected as it is, the arising of the Bodhicitta is, in fact, not at all a matter of chance. It is one of the most fundamental principles of Buddhist thought that whatever arises in the universe, at any level, arises in dependence on causes and conditions; not by chance, not as a result of 'fate', not as a result of the 'will of God', but in dependence upon natural — and even the supernatural is natural — causes and conditions. This applies also to the arising of the Bodhicitta within us. That event, that phenomenon, depends upon the creation of certain mental and spiritual conditions. These mental and spiritual conditions we can create within ourselves. When we create them, the Bodhicitta will then arise.

This fact draws our attention to one of the most important principles of the entire spiritual life: the need for preparation. We are usually, most of us, in far too much of a hurry. I don't mean just that we are working hard. I don't mean just that we are putting a lot of effort into things. I don't even mean that we are

doing things quickly. I mean that we are just in too much of a hurry. This means that we usually want results rather quickly. And, because we are so anxious to secure the results we very often neglect the preparations, we neglect the very conditions upon which the results depend. This is one of the reasons, if not the main reason, why we so often fail. But, on the other hand, if we make sufficiently careful preparations we can usually quite safely leave the results to look after themselves. We shall find that we almost succeed without noticing it.

This applies very much to meditation. If you want to meditate, for instance at home, you should not just sit down and just think you can meditate — that isn't possible. In the East there is a tradition that when you want to meditate, you should first of all go into the room in which you are going to meditate, and, very slowly and carefully, sweep it — you sweep the floor with a broom. You dust the room — if necessary, you dust the image of the Buddha there. You tidy the room. You do all this slowly, gently, mindfully. Then — in a meditative sort of mood — you change the flowers; you throw away the old flowers — in some Eastern countries you throw them into running water, not on the dust heap — and you cut fresh flowers, you put them in a vase, you arrange them thoughtfully: you take your time over it. Then, maybe you light a candle, maybe you light a stick of incense. You look around, just to see that everything is in order — maybe the window open for a bit of fresh air, the door shut to keep out disturbances. You arrange your seat, making sure it is placed square, and that if you are sitting on a piece of cloth it is properly folded. Then you sit down. You just adjust your clothing, put your feet into the proper posture — your hands. Even then, very often, you won't start meditating, you'll recite the Refuges, the Precepts, a few invocations to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.⁷ Then — and only then — you will start meditating. If one proceeds in this way, preparing, paving the way, then there is a very much greater chance of success. This is the case not just with regard to meditation, but even with regard to comparatively ordinary, daily activities. If you want to write something, if you want to paint a picture, even if you want to cook, the secret lies in the preparation.

It is just the same with regard to this matter of the arising of the Bodhicitta. One should not even think of becoming a Bodhisattva. (One should not even *think* of it.) It is not anything that you can become; it's not anything that you can sort of go into, follow a course, get a certificate — "you are a Bodhisattva". (I'm sorry to say that even in the East there are establishments which give certificates of this sort. People have these certificates framed and put up on their wall for all to see -- "I'm a Stream-Entrant", or "I'm a Bodhisattva". It's a sort of ecclesiastical rank or dignity, which is nonsense.) One shouldn't even think of developing the Bodhicitta. One can't even do that. One can't even think of it. It's out of the question. It's a waste of time. But, one can very well think of creating within oneself the conditions which will enable the Bodhicitta to manifest.

There are two ways of doing this. One way is associated with the name of Śāntideva, the other way is associated with the name of Vasubandhu. Both are great Indian masters of the Mahayana— Śāntideva in the seventh, and Vasubandhu probably in the fourth, centuries CE. Both of them are traditionally recognized as being themselves Bodhisattvas. Their two methods, though different, are complementary, and can even be combined.

Śāntideva's method is, frankly, more devotional. It is known as *anuttara-pūjā*, or 'Supreme Worship' ('Supreme Adoration' even). It consists in a series of what we may describe as seven spiritual exercises. Each of these exercises is expressive of a certain phase of the religious consciousness. When we externally go through certain ceremonies or recitations, corresponding to these different phases of the religious consciousness, then the Supreme Worship is known as the 'Sevenfold Worship'. We are, of course, quite familiar with this inasmuch as it is the 'Sevenfold Puja' — or Sevenfold Worship — that we recite every Friday evening after our lecture, before we disperse. But, though we perform externally — though we

recite with our lips — we must always recollect that the Supreme Worship, even the 'Sevenfold Puja', is essentially a sequence of devotional and spiritual moods and experiences, which, between them, pave the way for the arising of the Bodhicitta. Many of you are familiar with the 'Sevenfold Puja', and have joined us in reciting it here in this very room, but, for the benefit of those who are new to it, and those who perhaps haven't participated in it ever before, let me just very briefly go through these seven items.

First of all, there's what we call 'Worship' itself, worship proper. This is addressed principally to the Buddha: not just to the human, historical figure, but to the Buddha as the symbol or representative of the Ideal of Enlightenment itself. When we perform *pūjā*, or when we adopt the attitude of worship within our hearts, it means that we recognize with deep devotion, with great reverence, with awe, the sublimity, the value, of this Ideal of attaining Enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. And, feeling so powerfully and profoundly filled with this devotion, we cannot but make offerings, we cannot but give something. The most popular offerings are flowers, lights, and incense (though there are indeed many other things). These are offered before the Buddha image, representing our feeling of worship, of devotion, even of adoration, for that — as yet very distant — Ideal of Supreme Enlightenment. This is the 'Worship'.

Secondly there is what is known as the 'Obeisance', which literally means 'bowing down'. This consists simply in the payment of outward physical respect. Buddhist tradition says it is not enough just to feel something mentally. You are not just a 'thinker', you've not just got a brain; you've got speech, you've got a body, too. So, in any religious exercise all three must participate — body, speech, and mind. So one makes an external obeisance. At least, one puts the hands together in reverence and salutation. This is a gesture, also, of humility; we not only see the Ideal shining in the distance, but we recognize that as yet we are far from it. The Ideal, just like the Himalayan peaks, is there in the distance, and we are here. We have just put our foot onto the ... I won't even say onto the road, but onto a little path, leading to a lane, leading to a road, which leads to the pathway, leading to that sublime Enlightenment. So we, as it were, bow down, we make obeisance from a distance, seeing the Ideal shining afar off. This is what is meant by the 'Obeisance'.

Thirdly, there's the 'Going for Refuge'. We go for refuge to the Buddha, to the Dharma (or Teaching), and the Sangha* (or the Spiritual Community). We began in the 'Worship' by recognizing the Ideal (by just seeing it, venerating it, responding to it emotionally); then, in the 'Obeisance' we recognize (by our salutation, our obeisance) the distance at which we stand from it. Now, in this third stage, this phase of 'Going for Refuge', we commit ourselves to the actual realization of the Ideal. We recognize the Ideal 'there', we recognize that we stand 'here', and now we resolve that we will go forward from 'here' to 'there'. We commit ourselves to the realization of that Ideal; we commit ourselves to the Way leading to that realization; and we commit ourselves to the Company — the spiritual brotherhood and sisterhood — of all who walk that Way to Enlightenment along with us. This is the 'Going for Refuge'.

Then, fourthly, 'Confession of Faults'. Some people don't feel quite happy about this — I don't know whether it is because they feel they don't have any faults. What it really represents is a 'recognition' of the darker side of ourselves, that side of ourselves which we would rather other people did not see, which we would rather *ourselves* not see — which we try to forget, but which is always dogging and pursuing us, just like Mephistopheles dogging and pursuing Faust in Goethe's great poem. But, though we recognize this darker side — though we recognize our little weaknesses, our little shortcomings, our little backslidings, our little meannesses, our little furtivenesses, even our own, downright, plain, open, honest wickedness — this is not a matter of breastbeating. It is not a matter of proclaiming oneself the greatest sinner that ever lived. It is merely a realistic appraisal of our own shortcomings, as well as the resolve that, in future, we shall do our best to overcome them — because they are just so much luggage, so much extra weight, that we have to carry on this journey to Enlightenment, on which, of course, we have to travel very light indeed. So, this

is 'Confession of Faults'.

Then, fifthly, 'Rejoicing in Merits'. This means that we think of the lives of good, noble, virtuous, holy people; Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, great saints and sages; even great poets, great artists, great musicians, scientists, even ordinary people whom we know — who have exhibited, or who do exhibit, in their lives, outstanding human and spiritual qualities. We read about their lives, we admire them. We read their works, we recollect them. We think, "What a wonderful example — what heroism," or, " — what nobility, — what self-sacrifice, what fortitude, — what determination, — what purity, — what love, — what compassion!" We derive tremendous encouragement and inspiration from all this. We think, "Isn't this a marvellous thing that here in this wicked world, where one can encounter so much meanness and so much misery, at least from time to time, there do appear people of this sort", — you meet them, and you feel a little uplifted; you read about them even, you feel a little uplifted. You rejoice in the fact that the world can produce people of this sort. You rejoice in the fact that good, holy, and enlightened people live at every age of human history, in every part of the world, succouring and helping the rest of humanity in so many different ways — whether saint or sage, teacher or mystic, even as a scientist or administrator, the humble worker in a hospital, anybody who helps in any way to raise humanity to higher, more divine heights.

This is what is meant by 'Rejoicing in Merits': feeling happy in people's virtues. It is not denigrating, nor debunking — which now seems to be the fashion — but appreciating, and enjoying, and feeling happy in the contemplation of, other people's good qualities, good deeds, and good nature.

Then, sixthly, 'Entreaty and Supplication'. This means that we request those who are more enlightened than ourselves to teach us. It doesn't mean that unless we ask they are not going to teach. It doesn't mean that they have to be begged or cajoled into teaching. This should express our own attitude of inner readiness, and receptivity. We are saying, as it were, "I am open, please teach me. I would like to receive, please give." Unless there is this attitude of receptivity we can gain nothing, much less still the Bodhicitta. So this is 'Entreaty and Supplication'.

Seventh and lastly, 'Transference of Merit and Self-surrender'. According to Buddhist tradition, when you perform any good action you acquire a certain amount of merit* which helps you on your way. So, if you perform the ceremony of the 'Sevenfold Puja', if you enact within your own heart the Supreme Worship, a certain amount of merit accrues to you. But, what do you do with it? At the end, when you've gained it, you give it away. You say, "Whatever merit I might have gained by this performance," — whether it's *pūjā*, whether it's meditation, whether it's listening to a lecture, whether it's giving some money to a charity — "let that merit be shared by all, not just by me; not just for the sake of my own individual Emancipation (not just so that I can go to heaven leaving aside other people), but for the benefit of all."

So, at the end of this Puja one resolves, "Let this be for the benefit of all, not just for me." When one lifts this to a higher, and ever higher spiritual level, this of course becomes the Bodhisattva Ideal itself; one doesn't seek to gain even Enlightenment for one's own sake, but for the sake of all.

So this is the Supreme Worship, the method of Śāntideva, and I repeat that, even though we may recite it, chant it, perform it, it's not just a ceremony. It is not even just a set of spiritual exercises. It is essentially a sequence of devotional and spiritual moods and experiences (the performance of the external Puja may help, of course, induce the corresponding religious moods and experiences), and it is on account of these that we can become transformed to some extent. If our hearts are filled with sublime feelings of devotion; if we really feel the distance which separates us from the Ideal; if we are really determined to commit ourselves to the realization of the Ideal; if we truly see the darker side of our own nature; if we honestly

rejoice in the good deeds of others; if we are really receptive to higher spiritual influences; if we really wish to keep nothing back for ourselves alone — then, in dependence upon these states of mind and consciousness, the Bodhicitta, one day, may be able to arise. This is the soil, as it were, in which the seed of the Bodhicitta, once planted, can grow and flower.

Śāntideva's method is more devotional; Vasubandhu's method is more 'philosophical'. In Vasubandhu's method the arising of the Bodhicitta depends upon four factors. Let us briefly see what they are.

First, it arises in dependence, Vasubandhu says, on the 'Recollection of the Buddhas'. One thinks of the Buddhas of the past; one thinks of Śākyamuni, Gautama the Buddha, and of his great predecessors in remote aeons of 'human pre-history' (what scholars would refer to as legendary times): Dīpaṅkara, Koṇḍañña, and so on.⁸ And one reflects, in the words of the sutras, "As they were, so are we. As they became, so may we become." In other words, they started off as human beings, so do we. They started off with weaknesses and imperfections, so do we. They started off with all sorts of limitations, so do we. But then, look what they achieved. They transcended their limitations. They became Buddhas. They were human, we are human; what they achieved, we too may achieve — if only we make the effort. This sort of reflection is called the 'Recollection of the Buddhas', deriving inspiration from their example. This is one of the factors upon which the Bodhicitta arises.

Secondly, 'Seeing the Faults of Conditioned Existence'. Conditioned Existence is a technical term in Buddhism for phenomenal existence of every kind: physical, mental, and even what we might call in the West 'spiritual'. Whatever arises in dependence on causes and conditions is all called Conditioned Existence. It is axiomatic for Buddhism as a spiritual tradition that all conditioned existence is impermanent. It arises, it passes away. It may be an idea, it may be an empire. It may arise and disappear in an infinitesimal fraction of a second, or it may arise and disappear over a period of millions, even billions, of years, as in the case of a great galactic system. But whatever arises, sooner or later ceases. So everything conditioned is impermanent, transitory, and therefore also — Buddhism says — sorrowful, in the sense of not ultimately satisfactory, not ultimately most deeply satisfying, because, however great the satisfaction, an impermanent thing cannot give permanent satisfaction. So, sooner or later pain comes; the separation comes, the wrench comes, and then comes suffering. Everything also is, in a word, unreal: not in the sense that it doesn't exist and it isn't there, but what we think of as that particular thing is only the surface of something deeper. It isn't real in and by itself. It's only partly real, it's only relatively real. So one sees that conditioned existence as a whole has these 'faults', as they are technically called: it is impermanent, it's riddled with unsatisfactoriness, and it isn't ultimately real. One knows that nothing conditioned can fully satisfy the deepest longings of the human heart. The human heart is always craving for something permanent above and beyond the flux of time, something blissful, something permanently satisfying — which does not pall after a while — something also which is entirely real and true. In this way one 'Sees the Faults of Conditioned Existence'; one pierces and penetrates through the conditioned to the Unconditioned beyond. And, in dependence upon this factor also, this 'Seeing the Faults of Conditioned Existence', arises the Bodhicitta.

The third factor in dependence upon which the Bodhicitta arises is 'Observing the Sufferings of Sentient Beings'. And what a lot of sufferings there are! One has only got to open one's newspaper just to read about some of them. People hung, people shot, people executed, people burned to death. In the common run of things, people dying in all sorts of painful ways, from all sorts of dreadful diseases, or from hunger, from famine, from flood, from fire. Every day, almost every hour, almost every minute of the day — even as we are sitting here so peacefully — in other parts of the world many people must be dying very painful deaths, many people must be suffering in all sorts of horrible, and dreadful, and agonizing ways. One

doesn't need very much imagination to realize this when one thinks in terms of volcanic eruptions, and earthquakes, and aeroplane crashes, to say nothing of war, to say nothing of sudden death. Even if one thinks of something to which, in our callousness, we have become very accustomed: deaths on the road (due to careless driving very often, or to careless walking) — even that is sufficiently horrible.

So one reflects upon all these sufferings to which human existence is heir, to which flesh itself seems heir. Even the struggle of getting on in the world, of 'making both ends meet', of leading a happy human existence: sometimes it seems very difficult indeed. You strive and you struggle to do the decent thing, to do the right thing, to do the honest thing. You strive to lift your head a little bit above the waves. You've just got your head above the waves, and you're swimming with all your might (as it were), and you're sort of gasping for breath, and ... a great wave comes along and overwhelms you again. Down you go, and maybe up you come (yet again) to go through it all over again — again and again. This is human life.

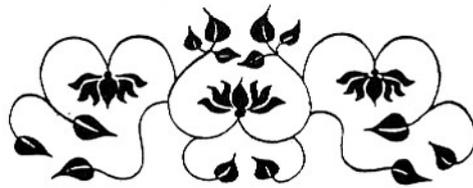
So if one looks at it objectively one sees that in many ways — no doubt this is only one side of the picture, but it is a side which we very often ignore — human life is very often a painful and miserable thing (as one of the English philosophers said, "nasty, brutish, and short"). And these are the sort of things that we should bear in mind. And I have mentioned only the sufferings of human beings, but what about the animals? What about all those animals that are trapped for fur, or slaughtered, either for human consumption or just for human pleasure, for sport (as it's called): — "the unspeakable in pursuit of the uneatable", as somebody said of foxhunting? So if one thinks of these things, if one observes, if one 'feels' the sufferings of sentient beings, then this also, Vasubandhu says, is a factor in dependence upon which the Bodhicitta arises.

Then, fourthly and lastly, there is the factor of the 'Contemplation of the Virtues of the *Tathāgatas*'⁹ (*Tathāgatas* means the Buddhas, the Enlightened Ones.) There are several ways of doing this. One can contemplate those virtues — and 'virtues' here doesn't mean just the ethical virtues, it means the spiritual qualities — by reading, say, the life of the Buddha, or the life of Milarepa,¹⁰ who also was an Enlightened One. One can do it by just performing a *pūjā* in front of an image, just sitting, perhaps, and looking at the image, trying to feel what is behind the image (what it represents, what it symbolizes). Or, as in Tibetan Buddhism, one can contemplate the spiritual qualities of the Buddhas by means of visualization exercises, by conjuring up a sort of vivid mental picture, a sort of archetypal vision, of the Buddha, or of a Bodhisattva who also symbolizes Supreme Enlightenment. What one does in these practices — and this, of course, is summarizing very drastically indeed — is to see this visualized form more and more vividly, and then gradually feel oneself, as it were, merged with it. Whether it is the Buddha of Infinite Light, or the Buddha of Eternal Life, whether it's the Red or the Blue Buddha, whether it's the Bodhisattva of Compassion or Wisdom, you contemplate them, you visualize them clearly, you feel and see yourself connected with them by a shaft of light which gets brighter and brighter, shorter and shorter, until the two of you merge. Your heart, as it were, merges with the heart of the Buddha, the heart of the Bodhisattva, the heart of Enlightenment. And in this way one 'Contemplates the Virtues of the *Tathāgatas*'. And in dependence on this factor also, the Bodhicitta arises.

This is Vasubandhu's method. The Bodhicitta here arises in dependence on: Recollection of the Buddhas; Seeing the Faults of Conditioned Existence; Observing the Sufferings of Sentient Beings; and Contemplating the Virtues of the *Tathāgatas*. In dependence on all these four factors simultaneously, the Bodhicitta arises. And surely, without even going into these traditional details too closely, it isn't very difficult to understand why and how this should be. By the Recollection of the Buddhas one becomes convinced that Enlightenment is possible. They have attained, why should not I attain? In this way energy and vigour is stirred up. On Seeing the Faults of Conditioned Existence (how impermanent it is, how basically

unsatisfactory, not ultimately real) one becomes detached from conditioned existence, indifferent to it. The trend, or the stream, of one's existence sets in the direction of the Unconditioned. Then, by Observing the Sufferings of Sentient Beings — whether in imagination or, close at hand, in actual fact — surely, in this way compassion arises, love arises, sympathy arises. We don't think only of our own salvation, we want to help, we want to succour. Then, by Contemplating the Virtues of the *Tathāgatas* (their Purity, their Peace, their Wisdom, their Love, their Enlightenment, their Eternal Life, their Infinite Light) gradually, as I described, we become assimilated to them, and approach the Goal.

And as these four, as it were, coalesce; as energy, and detachment, and compassion, and this 'becoming one' with the Buddhas, all start coalescing within our hearts — then the Bodhicitta arises, then the 'awakening of the heart' has been achieved, then a Bodhisattva is born.



Seminar Extracts

1 Joyful is the First Stage

from *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism* Mixed Order Retreat, Abhirati, August 1974

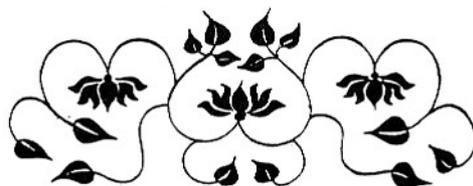
Ten Stages of Bodhisattvahood

(1) *The Pramuditā*

Pramuditā means "delight" or "joy" and marks the first stage of Bodhisattvahood, at which the Buddhists emerge from a cold, self-sufficing, and almost nihilistic contemplating of Nirvāna as fostered by the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas. This spiritual emergence and emancipation is psychologically accompanied by an intense feeling of joy, as that which is experienced by a person when he unexpectedly recognises the most familiar face in a faraway land of strangers. For this reason the first stage is called "joy".

Suzuki, D. T., *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism*, Schocken, New York 1970, pp. 313-4

Sangharakshita: Let's forget all about the comparisons with the Hinayana and so on. What is really being said here is that when the Bodhicitta arises in the heart of a human being, thereby making him a Bodhisattva, its first great manifestation is that of joy. There is a sense of joy, because something of tremendous importance has happened and the emotional response [to that] is great joy. Therefore the first stage in the Bodhisattva's career is called *pramuditā*, 'joyful'. This is quite feasible, because whenever there is a spiritual breakthrough, whenever you achieve something higher, there is a sensation of joy; although we're still on a relatively low level compared with Enlightenment itself.



2 A Further Level of Experience

from Questions and Answers on the Bodhisattva Ideal, Pre-Ordination Retreat, Tuscany 1984

Will Spens: I think you said that the Bodhicitta is more likely to arise collectively within a spiritual community. Why is this, and how would it manifest?

Sangharakshita: We have already seen that one can regard Stream-Entry and the Bodhicitta as different aspects of the same experience. So if one says that the Bodhicitta is more likely to arise within the spiritual community, I think one also has to say that one is more likely to attain Stream-Entry within the spiritual

community. Why is that? I think the reason is pretty obvious: because a spiritual community represents a situation of intense mutual spiritual friendship wherein you encourage one another in your efforts. So in such a situation — perhaps, say, on retreat, or as in a spiritual community — you are much more likely to achieve that sort of breakthrough, whether in terms of Stream-Entry or of the arising of the Bodhicitta, than if you were on your own. This is not to say that you can't do it on your own, and certainly many people have done it on their own; but I think for the majority of people the spiritual community is a much more favourable context for that sort of experience.

I must say though, that, speaking of the Bodhicitta, I was going somewhat further than that even, in a way that is not quite applicable in connection with Stream-Entry. I spoke of the Bodhicitta as representing the idea of working for the salvation or emancipation of all beings, but at the same time realizing that there were no beings to be saved or emancipated. In much the same way, I am trying to suggest something which is as it were supra-individual, but which is not collective — and this is very difficult.

It is as though you have a number of stages. First of all, you have the sub-individual; that is stage one, where there is no individuality, where there is as it were only membership of the species or group. Then you have a second or intermediate level, where you have the individual; perhaps in opposition to the group. Sometimes two kinds of individual are distinguished here: the individual as held down by the group, dominated by the group; and the individual as dominating the group.

But then there is another stage still, a third stage, where the individual as it were stands free of the group altogether, and is just an individual.* You all understand what that means because we have been into it so much. But, beyond that, you have another stage where the individual enters into free association with other individuals, and this is what we call the spiritual community. Time and again, of course, we have insisted that this is not the same thing as a group. A free association of real individuals is not a group, it is a spiritual community. But you can envisage something even beyond that. We don't have any word for it — we don't even have a word for the spiritual community — but if you can envisage what happens as a result of the intensive interaction of individuals, real individuals, one might even say transcendental individuals, what results, one might say, is the Bodhicitta. It is not an individual thing, in the same way that the individual is an individual. It is another level beyond that. At the same time, it is not something collective which all those individuals possess in common. I think some of the language that I used in the lecture may give that impression, but that was not my intention.

So one has these five different levels. But one speaks of the arising of the Bodhicitta here rather than of Stream-Entry, because the Bodhicitta, perhaps more for historical reasons, has this other-regarding reference, which Stream-Entry does not. Stream-Entry has, so to speak, a self-regarding reference — even though in the case of Stream-Entry there is no self, just as in the case of the Bodhicitta there are no others, in an ultimate metaphysical sense.

Vessantara: Could you see the Bodhicitta as a sort of common purpose of an *Āryasangha*?¹¹

S.: Well, you could certainly speak of a common purpose of an *Āryasangha*, and you could even speak of the arising of the Bodhicitta as being that common purpose, but at the same time you must not think of it as something, as it were, collective. That Bodhicitta, when it had arisen, would not be a purpose in that sort of collective sense. One has come to a level in which it is very difficult to find words which adequately express what happens.

Prasannasiddhi: Don't you also say that the Bodhicitta will arise when one sees the sufferings of sentient beings? It would seem to imply a sort of more worldly, as opposed to a spiritual, community — association with the people of the world as opposed to the people of the spiritual community.

S.: Certainly! I mentioned that in the course of a lecture. This is one of the four factors which Vasubandhu mentions. It constitutes, in a way, a spiritual practice: you know, that you reflect upon the sufferings of others, and in this way stimulate yourself to develop the Bodhicitta so that you can help others. But as it is a spiritual practice and all spiritual practices can be intensified within the spiritual community, inasmuch as you encourage one another, you can encourage one another in this respect too. So to that extent the Bodhicitta is still more likely to arise within the spiritual community.

But, of course, one is not to take this expression 'within the spiritual community' too literally; it is not that it is within a particular closed circle of people. It is really trying to convey another level of development beyond even individuality, perhaps [beyond] even transcendental individuality as we usually understand it. The spiritual community is not necessarily located in a particular place and occupying certain physical bodies.

Prasannasiddhi: So you could be living in society and involved with sentient beings who are suffering, but on another level you're in contact with...

S.: Well, you could be on your own — on solitary retreat, for example — but in a sense you could be in contact with other members of the spiritual community; you would be very aware of them, and they would be aware of you. One must not think too much in terms of actual physical contact — though obviously one has to do so at first, and one certainly should not use the fact that you are or are supposed to be in contact on another level as an excuse for neglecting contact on the level on which you are actually operative. None the less, it is, in a sense, the non-physical contact which is important — even though that is mediated through the physical body, because we identify ourselves so much with that physical body.

Padmavajra: So, to take the case of the Movement, you wouldn't think of the Bodhicitta arising within your own particular community; you would think in terms of, say, the wider Movement?

S.: Yes, indeed.

Padmavajra: Perhaps even beyond that.

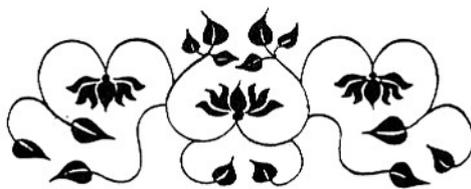
S.: But you mustn't think even of the spiritual community in the wider sense too literally. What I am trying to get at is that the arising of the Bodhicitta represents a quite different type of experience, a further level of experience, above and beyond that level at which you have a number of individuals — even, so to speak, transcendental individuals — freely associating and co-operating. The emergence of the Bodhicitta represents a level beyond even that.

Prasannasiddhi: It would actually require some amount of contact. It would presumably include telepathic communication.

S.: It would depend on the degree of development of those individuals; it could be telepathic. But I did caution against jumping to the conclusion that because it was all right to be in telepathic contact, [if] you could be, therefore you could neglect actual physical contact. One could also say that it is a question of a higher level of consciousness or experience arising in dependence on a lower one. So that when you have,

say, your spiritual community, in the sense of a number of individuals — that is to say, real individuals, especially what I have called transcendental individuals — then, in dependence upon those individuals taken *as it were* collectively, what is the next stage that arises? Well, that next stage is what we call the Bodhicitta.

In other words, the Bodhicitta is not to be thought of as somebody's individual achievement or individual possession; it is not, at the same time, that it is *not* your individual achievement or individual possession. So [if] one speaks of it as arising within the spiritual community, that is not to say that it belongs to the spiritual community rather than to an individual: the concept of belonging, one would hope, is transcended altogether.



3 One and Many

from Questions and Answers on the Bodhisattva Ideal, Pre-Ordination Retreat, Tuscany 1984

Padmavajra: The point about the next level, beyond the transcendental individuals co-operating, being the Bodhicitta — is that what you are suggesting is being [conveyed] in the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*,¹² when the Licchavi youths, who will develop the Bodhicitta, brought their parasols to the Buddha, who turned them into one parasol?

S.: Yes. Though, of course, one must not take that 'one' too literally! One could put it differently and say that those five hundred parasols, without ceasing to be five hundred parasols, became at the same time one parasol. But it is not, either, that you had a sort of mosaic of tiny parasols! (*Laughter.*) Really, you are transcending the concepts of sameness and difference. So you no longer have, say, five hundred different parasols — five hundred units — but neither have they actually been resolved or dissolved into one unit. The 'one' represents a quite different order of experience.

In other words one might say that, for Buddhism, featureless unity does not represent Reality in the highest sense. For Buddhism, Reality is essentially, one might say, diversified; it is a unity in difference and a difference in unity. This is why, in the Avatamsaka School,¹³ they have this simile of the different beams of coloured light going in all directions, intersecting one another and passing through one another, and being transparent to one another, and one not obstructing the other. So that there is oneness, and at the same time there is diversity. It is not that everything is reduced to one, so that there are no differences; at the same time it is not that there are differences to such an extent that unity is obliterated. It is that you have unity in the midst of differences, difference in the midst of unity, and even difference *revealing* unity, and unity making difference possible. That is more the Buddhist vision of things, certainly from the Avatamsaka point of view.

So when I speak in the lecture, I believe, in terms of one Bodhicitta, I am not to be understood as meaning a Bodhicitta in which individual Bodhicittas have, so to speak, been obliterated, so that there is a single, as it were collective, Bodhicitta in which everybody participates — though I believe my language might lend itself to that idea. But in the lecture, which was given quite early in the history of the FWBO, I was simply concerned to counter the view that your Bodhicitta might be just an extension, so to speak, of your individuality, so that there were as many Bodhicittas as there were individuals. But the fact that I spoke of one Bodhicitta is not to be understood as meaning that the differences are cancelled out.

Susiddhi: You use the simile in the next lecture of white light coming through a prism, or through different prisms.

S.: Right: so that there are differences, as it were, within unity, and unity within differences, in this respect.

Prasannasiddhi: But when you say differences in unity, unity in differences, doesn't Buddhism even go beyond that in a sense, so that even that is too limited?

S.: Yes, but once you go beyond that, you can't say anything at all! That is fair enough. Vimalakīrti goes beyond in that sort of way; perhaps we should too, but at the end of the course. (*Laughter.*)

4 You and Not You

from *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism* Mixed Order Retreat, Abhirati, August 1974

Nāgārjuna and Sthiramati on the Bodhicitta

Says Nāgārjuna in his Discourse on the Transcendentality of the Bodhicitta: "The Bodhicitta is free from all determinations, that is, it is not included in the categories of the five skandhas, the twelve āyatanas, and the eighteen dhātus. It is not a particular existence which is palpable. It is non-ātmanic, universal. It is uncreated and its self-essence is void [cūṇya, immaterial, or transcendental]."

"One who understands the nature of the Bodhicitta sees everything with a loving heart, for love is the essence of the Bodhicitta."

"The Bodhicitta is the highest essence."

"Therefore, all Bodhisattvas find their raison d'être of existence in this great loving heart."

Suzuki, D. T., *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism*, Schocken, New York 1970, pp. 297-

8

Sangharakshita: *"The Bodhicitta is free from all determinations, that is, it is not included in the categories of the five skandhas, the twelve āyatanas and the eighteen dhātus..."*¹⁴ This is said to make it absolutely clear that in terms of the traditional Hinayana classification the Bodhicitta is not phenomenal, not empirical. It is not something conditioned: it is something transcendental. It is not a thought, it is not an idea, it is not a volition. It is something quite different from all those things. It is non-ātman, universal, uncreated in its self-essence, void: so it's transcendental.

Lokamitra: It can't be called a volition?

S.: I speak of the Will to Enlightenment, but only analogically. If you want to use Suzuki's language — though you must be very cautious when using his language — it is the Will of the *Dharmakāya** breaking through into and as it were taking over *your* will. If the Bodhicitta is functioning through you and you are doing certain things on account of that, to somebody else observing you it will look as though *you* are willing. Unless they know you very well, or they are spiritually very perceptive, they won't know that it is the Bodhicitta, the Will of the *Dharmakāya*.

So it is rather like in Christianity when one speaks of 'doing the will of God, not your own will'. It's a very mysterious thing and very difficult to speak about. You can say that your will is blended with the will of the *Dharmakāya*, or the will of God, or whatever. But it's not that you've become a passive machine and [are] just being operated from outside! The Bodhicitta is *you*, but you have ceased to be something phenomenal. You've been transformed into — if one can use that language — something transcendental; something transcendental has germinated in you, or come into you from outside. These are both valid modes of expression for the Bodhicitta. It isn't explicable in terms of anything that you were before; all that you were before was the 'Five *Skandhas*', or the 'Twelve *Āyatanas*', or the 'Eighteen *Dhātus*'. But the Bodhicitta, which is mysteriously you and yet not you, is none of those things and not included in any of those things: it's transcendental.

Perhaps we could use a horizontal analogy for a vertical reality. Suppose you do something that somebody else wants you to do. Is it your volition or theirs? Suppose there is someone you genuinely love very much and they want something done. They want you to do something and you do it. You can say that you make their will your will. There is no question of them taking you over by compulsion, or using you as a kind of puppet. Their will becomes blended with yours. Now suppose that person is spiritually more highly developed than you and wants you to do something. And you completely genuinely take their will upon yourself so their will becomes your will. You are not just obeying. You are not just submitting. You genuinely embrace their will and their will becomes your will. Not that *you* are doing what *they* want. No. *You* are doing what *you* want. But the initiative comes from the other person. In a way the other person showed you what you really wanted. That person's will, which is higher than yours, has become your will. Now if you carry that to an extreme and make that person a Buddha then you do the Buddha's will, you make the Buddha's will your own. Then we come very close to the manifestation of the Bodhicitta in an empirical personality. It's not a mechanical taking over. Your will is transformed into the Bodhicitta. Not only your will but your thought and emotion, too: *you* are transformed into the Bodhicitta. Your phenomenal being is transformed to some extent into the being of the Bodhisattva, you become to some extent a being of Enlightenment, to the extent that a transcendental dimension has entered into your existence and your being. It's not completely continuous, however; it's not a mere refinement of the phenomenal. There is a radical break...

"*One who understands the nature of the Bodhicitta sees everything with a loving heart, for love is the essence of the Bodhicitta.*" Not one who understands it intellectually, looking at it from outside, but one who has realized the Bodhicitta to some extent. One in whom the Bodhicitta has arisen sees everything with a compassionate heart, with *karuṇā citta*. "*...all Bodhisattvas find their raison d'être of existence in this great loving heart*". In other words, it's the Bodhicitta which makes the Bodhisattva. You can do everything you like, you can be as altruistic as you like, but you are not a Bodhisattva if you haven't got Bodhicitta: if the transcendental dimension hasn't entered into you, if the Will of the *Dharmakāya* is not manifesting

through you, working through you. You are not a Bodhisattva if you don't see everything from a transcendental perspective, which is completely different from a mundane perspective.

Sudatta: Is there any test one could apply to ascertain whether or not the Bodhicitta had arisen? If one clinically took a person, could one apply any objective test or assessment...

S.: Not clinically or objectively, but spiritually you would see. In someone who is just altruistic there is a reaction sooner or later. You couldn't stand helping people continuously, you could even start hating those you were trying to help. Or at least, you would feel strained. The Bodhisattva does not feel strain or tension because he is acting out of the Bodhicitta. I think this is a great indication. Very often, if you are trying to help people and they don't appreciate it, you feel disappointed, hurt, resentful. This shows that you haven't got Bodhicitta, you are not a Bodhisattva.

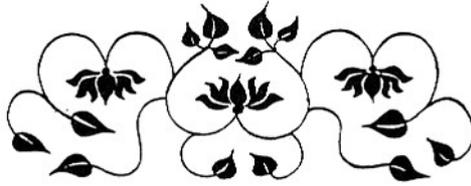
Lokamitra: But altruism is a valid way of preparing for the Bodhicitta to arise?

S.: Oh, surely! But one must be conscious of one's intention. "I am doing this not because I am a great Bodhisattva, but because I hope that the Bodhicitta may descend." Certainly, this is one of the ways. But you must be careful not to be doing so much for other beings that you end up hating them. This can actually happen!

Of course, until such time as the Bodhicitta arises, practise metta, and actions based on metta; but don't delude yourself that you are being a Bodhisattva. A Bodhisattva is something higher, something greater, and constituted essentially by the Bodhicitta; which is transcendental. Once the Bodhicitta has arisen, then you really are leading a spiritual life, a transcendental life. The Bodhicitta isn't included in the 'Five *Skandhas*', or 'Twelve *Āyatanas*', or 'Eighteen *Dhātus*': it's non-*ātmanic*, non-samsaric. In a sense it's nothing to do with you. You provide the basis on which it manifests; but once it's manifested, it becomes curiously blended with you, *you* become blended with it. We really don't have a language to describe what happens. Apart from my illustration of you making somebody else's will your will; and your will their will.

A Voice: We had a Christian example of this back in the book, where Paul was saying, "Not my will but Christ's".

S.: In principle this is much the same thing. But when the Bodhicitta arises it's not a 'taking over', it's not a 'replacement of' your will by somebody else's will, not your ego-will [being] driven out by somebody else's ego-will. People can 'do the will of God' in that sort of way, or even observe the Buddhist precepts in that way. But the arising of the Bodhicitta is a merging or blending of your limited phenomenal will with some higher transcendental purpose, and you become that; which you weren't before. It transcends the phenomenal framework of the 'Five *Skandhas*'.



5 A Thousand Arms One Bodhisattva

from 'The Precious Garland' (*The Precious Garland and the Song of the Four Mindfulnesses*)
Men's Mitra Seminar, Padmaloka, August 1976

*[A Bodhisattva] stays for a limitless time [in the world],
For limitless embodied beings he seeks
The limitless [qualities of] enlightenment
And performs virtuous actions without limit.*

The Precious Garland and the Song of the Four Mindfulnesses, (The Buddhism of Tibet), Nāgārjuna and the 7th Dalai Lama, Allen & Unwin, London 1984, v. 219

Sangharakshita: In a way you have to take the Theravada and the Mahayana together: take the Theravada as a guide for the here and now, for day-to-day practice, and take the Mahayana as a guide to the Ideal: the spiritual Ideal as it exists independently of any historical context and outside space and time — and independently of one's own rather pathetic efforts. This is why I sometimes say that there's only one Bodhisattva — just as there's only one Buddha and one Bodhicitta. But the Bodhisattva is in a way a personification of the Bodhicitta, so that when you write Bodhisattva with a capital 'B', you could even say that the Bodhisattva represents the spirit of the Higher Evolution...

What I'm trying to do is — not exactly bring the Mahayana down to earth — but to make a distinction between an ideal as it exists independent of any concrete situation and the attempt to embody the Ideal in the concrete situation.

For instance, let's compare it with the *Nirmānakāya** and the *Sambhogakāya** of the Buddha. If you had been alive at the time of the Buddha, would you have expected to see him walking around North-Eastern India wearing thirty-two major and eighty minor marks? I mean, would he have appeared exactly as he's depicted on, say, a Tibetan *thangka*? No. Why is that? The Buddha as depicted on a Tibetan *thangka* represents a different order of existence. But does that mean that the Buddha represented on the Tibetan *thangka* wasn't there at the time of the human historical Buddha? You couldn't have seen him anyway — at least not with the eye of flesh — but then where would he have been? Would he have been non-existent then? Or what?

So it's much the same with the Bodhisattva. The Bodhisattva as described in the Mahayana sutras corresponds in a way to the *Sambhogakāya* Buddha: he's the Ideal as it exists outside space and time. Not the Ideal as *realized*, which the Buddha represents, but the *Ideal in process of realization*. So just as the human historical Buddha on the human historical level doesn't fully express — due to the limitations of the historical situation — what he actually realizes in his inner being, in the same way the individual person

who is trying to be a Bodhisattva doesn't express the full nature of the Bodhisattva Ideal — in fact cannot express it because it has reference not just to the individual situation in which he finds himself, but all space and time.

A Voice: So it doesn't exist outside of man?

S.: It doesn't exist outside of man at work in the universe; it's working through man, through living beings. You could say, therefore, that the Bodhisattva is the spirit of the Higher Evolution; but no one situation, no one individual aspiring to that Ideal, can fully express it. So the Bodhisattva as described by the Mahayana represents that Ideal as fully expressed.

For instance, take the figure of Avalokiteśvara with a thousand arms and eleven heads.¹⁵ This expresses something of that: that the Bodhisattva is so many-sided, so omnipresent, doing so much. It wouldn't be possible for any one person, in any one given historical situation, to do all those things. So the Bodhisattva, as an ideal, doesn't represent something to be copied by each individual. That is quite impossible; it would be a contradiction in terms. But an individual is to imbibe the spirit of that and express it in his own way, within his own life and his own immediate situation.

So therefore you mustn't take too literally the Bodhisattva's vow¹⁶ about delivering all beings throughout the universe; this is the Bodhisattva *spirit* speaking. You will do your bit by delivering those beings who fall within your particular sphere of influence. You can aspire to be just one of the thousand arms of Avalokiteśvara. Because the arm belongs to Avalokiteśvara; Avalokiteśvara does not belong to the arm. Do you see what I'm getting at? If you think that you have to be the Bodhisattva, well, it's like the arm thinking it's got to be Avalokiteśvara, or that Avalokiteśvara belongs to the arm — whereas in fact it's the other way round: you've got to be *an* arm of Avalokiteśvara.

Is this clear? Or is it still obscure? It's not surprising if it's obscure because I don't think it has been explained by anybody else.

A Voice: It's a lot clearer.

S.: Otherwise, if you take literally some of the things that the Mahayana sutras say, you get into all sorts of contradictory situations. For instance, if we take it that there are lots of people, thousands of people, all aspiring to be Bodhisattvas and to deliver all beings — if each one of them is going to deliver all beings, won't they get in each other's way? (*Laughter.*) So what does it mean? That there can only be one Bodhisattva, one Bodhisattva spirit, working throughout space and throughout time. And individuals who accept that Ideal do their bit within their own particular sphere. But the idea of each one as an individual aspiring to that cosmic function: that is ridiculous.

Ananda: So the Bodhisattva in that archetypal sense is identical to the Bodhicitta?

S.: Yes. That's why I say it's the personification, in a way, of the Bodhicitta.

Ananda: There's almost no way of differentiating between them?

S.: Well, you could say the Bodhicitta is the psychological-cum-spiritual principle, and the Bodhisattva is the embodiment of that in human form.

Ananda: But in that sense — as a principle rather than an individual being — the Bodhisattva in a way becomes the Bodhicitta.

S.: Yes. And this is why I've said in the past that the Bodhicitta is not anybody's individual property or possession. How can it be? Nāgārjuna says that the Bodhicitta is not included in the 'Five *Skandhas*'. In other words, it's not part and parcel of the empirical personality; the Bodhicitta is not a thought of your individual mind. If you translate it as 'Will to Enlightenment', it's not an act of will of your individual being. We can only express it in terms of something that, as it were, takes you over, something into which you are lifted up. So in a sense it is you, but in another sense it is not you.

A Voice: So is the Bodhisattva all beings? Not one man?

S.: Well, you could say all the bodhisattvas are one Bodhisattva. We speak of Avalokiteśvara and of Mañjuśrī, etc., etc., but we mustn't think of them as being literally distinct supernatural personalities 'up there' or in some other world. They're all different ways of looking at that one and the same Bodhisattva; in other words at that one and the same spiritual power at work in the universe.

A Voice: So you could take ten thousand people all with different qualities and say that together they're a manifestation of the Bodhisattva principle?

S.: You could. To the extent that the Bodhicitta has arisen in them, to that extent they are one being — or different facets of one being. This is bound up, again, with the idea of the spiritual community. The spiritual community is not a group; it's made up of individuals. So when those individuals come together and are in communication, you get a spiritual community. So suppose that in all the individuals who make up the spiritual community the Bodhicitta arises. Supposing that there's a hundred such individuals; have you got a hundred Bodhicittas? and a hundred embryo Bodhisattvas? No, you've got only one Bodhicitta arising 'in' — for want of a better term — these different minds. So they form, as it were, one Bodhisattva; they are, as it were, one being. They've gone to the opposite extreme from a group. They're even more than a spiritual community; they've become — in a manner of speaking — one being, ... which is at the same time something supra-individual.

A Voice: But if the bodhisattvas were people the Bodhicitta had arisen in, would it exist anywhere else?

S.: Well, it doesn't exist anywhere. It doesn't exist even there [in those people] in the sense of being limited to there. But it has arisen there in the sense of manifesting there. It can arise, it can manifest, anywhere.

A Voice: It's potentially limitless.

S.: Yes. It manifests wherever it gets an opportunity. It can at the same time be manifesting in other spiritual communities, in other worlds, in other universes. So one mustn't take all this talk of different bodhisattvas too literally, or regard the Mahayana sutras as referring to distinct personalities.

So all that one can do as an individual — I say 'all' but it's a very big thing — is to open oneself to that higher spiritual force which we call the Bodhicitta: this sort of movement or tendency of the spirit of the Higher Evolution in the direction of Ultimate Enlightenment for the benefit of all. Or, in more traditional Buddhist language, one puts oneself in touch with the Bodhisattva — or Bodhisattvas, if one likes to think in the plural.

A Voice: It seems to resemble mirrors; you can have any number of mirrors reflecting one sun...

S.: Yes. There is a traditional simile of pots of water reflecting the moon. The moon is one but the pots of water are many...

A Voice: But for the mirrors to be reflecting they have to be correctly placed...

S.: Yes, and they have to be clean and not cracked.

Uttara: What is the Bodhicitta made up of? What's its substance?

S.: Well, Buddhism doesn't believe in substance. And one mustn't think of the Bodhicitta as a thing. Because if you ask what it's made of, it assumes it's a thing. But the whole point is: it isn't a thing. Nothing is a thing in Buddhism (*laughter*). It only appears like that. So we think of it as a thing but that's wrong; that's our mistake.

A Voice: Or a force?

S.: Even to think of it as a force isn't quite right. But it's better than 'thing', because a force is in movement, a force changes, a force is a process, a force is dynamic. So that's nearer the truth; 'thing' is rather static.

Uttara: Is it an inherent process in our minds?

S.: Well, what do you mean by 'inherent' process? The process goes on. Does it really mean anything to ask whether it is inherent? It's a process which we can initiate, or which we can allow to happen within us — or not allow. That's up to us.

Uttara: Could we talk in terms of us not using a certain potential of our energy? That most of the time we block all this off in some way?

S.: One can think in those terms, but again one must beware of using language literally. For instance, if one says that we are potentially Buddhas now and we've only got to wake up to it — well, what's happened to our Buddhahood if it is there now? To say that it is there is only a way of saying that if you make the effort, then you can experience it. But it's not there in any literal sense. That's only a manner of speaking. It's a way of saying that you have the capacity to develop that. So the question of where it is before you've developed it doesn't really arise.

Perhaps a better term would be 'Cosmic Bodhisattva': the Bodhisattva spirit at work in the universe, to which we can open ourselves and of which we can be expressions — but whose functions we cannot, as individuals, take over. This is what I'm getting at.

Atula: Then, in this sense, what is the Bodhisattva vow?

S.: Well, as it is framed in the Mahayana sutras the suggestion seems to be that you as an individual — one miserable individual — promise to take over all the functions of the Cosmic Bodhisattva. But can you even think of doing that? No, you can't. The best you can say is: "Let me be a vehicle of that Cosmic Bodhisattva. Let at least a fraction of one of those vows be fulfilled through me." Otherwise you'd suffer not only from spiritual indigestion but tremendous spiritual inflation.

Atula: So the Bodhisattva's vow is more an expression of the Ideal within yourself?

S.: The vow is an expression of what the Cosmic Bodhisattva is doing. It's a process that's going on all the time — and one can make oneself a channel for that, one can help effectuate it.

A Voice: I find it hard not to think of it as a thinking process.

S.: Well, since the Bodhisattva is being described, it can't be put in any other way. But actually there's not a mind there. Not that it's a blind, impersonal, natural force. It's a seeing and aware spiritual force, but not a force which is personal in any sense that we understand it. It's supra-personal, though that too is really only a word to us. It's personality of a type that we can't really imagine.



6 With Roots in the Sky

from Questions and Answers on the Bodhisattva Ideal, Pre-Ordination Retreat, Tuscany 1984

Abhaya (A question on behalf of Steve Webster): In *The Endlessly Fascinating Cry*¹⁷ you said words to the effect that the Bodhicitta has great value as a myth or symbol. Could you say more about that?

Sangharakshita: I am not sure what I had in mind then, but what occurs to me now is that it means you should not take the Bodhicitta literally, as a sort of doctrine or theory. By saying that it is a myth one means that the term Bodhicitta refers to an experience, a transcendental experience if you like, which cannot be adequately described in conceptual terms. The words myth or symbol suggest that the Bodhicitta is something which is emotionally moving, which stirs us on a much deeper level than that of the intellect or the ordinary waking consciousness. Perhaps it is better to think of the Bodhicitta in *those* terms, rather than to take it as representing one of the doctrines or teachings of Buddhism. The term myth or symbol suggests something that has a definite impact upon us, something that we necessarily experience, something that we cannot simply think about.

Abhaya: I wondered also if it had any tie-up with what you were saying a few years ago about the Gestalt, and the Movement finding a gestalt — fragments of myth deep inside oneself. Does it relate to that at all?

S.: I think one could say that. After all, I have spoken of the Bodhicitta arising, say, within the context of a spiritual community of, especially, let us say transcendental individuals. One could even think of that in a poetic rather than a precise doctrinal sense, as constituting their myth — in the sense, for instance, that one speaks of the myth of the *Sukhāvātī-vyūha Sūtra*.¹⁸ When it speaks about Amitābha and how he was

originally a monk called Dharmākara, the *Sukhāvatī-vyūha Sūtra* is not giving factual information about other universes and past ages of prehistory. It is creating a myth. Similarly, one can speak of the Bodhicitta as a myth. [One can] even speak of the Bodhisattva as a myth, though one must be careful, of course, to make it clear that one is not using the word myth to mean something false or imaginary.

So one could, in that way, speak of the Bodhicitta as constituting the myth of the Movement rather than speak of the Movement having a blueprint or a five-year plan — or even a five-hundred year plan — or of the idea of the Movement. It might be more evocative and more inspiring, and more emotionally moving, to speak of the myth of the Movement, making clear of course what exactly you meant by myth. I think the word myth nowadays has been generally rehabilitated, and most people would not misunderstand what you meant, [though] maybe they would not put quite so much into the word as you would.

Simon Turnbull: For the benefit of those who might misunderstand it, how would you define or explain myth in this sense?

S.: Well, without trying to remember what Jung¹⁹ said, a myth is a story, you might say — a story about the gods and goddesses, and beings of that sort. What are these gods and goddesses? They are beings, or, if you like, powers and forces, that exist on some other level, on some other plane of being. So when one speaks of the myth, say, of the FWBO, what one means is that the Movement doesn't really consist of this collection of rather scruffy-looking individuals (*laughter*) — that's only, to change the metaphor, the tip of the iceberg, the tiny apex of that pyramid I spoke about earlier.

Actually, what one sees as the Movement, materially, is only a tiny fraction of what is happening. Something else is happening on some other level, on some other plane, which is infinitely vaster. What one sees of the Movement that we call the FWBO is just a tiny part, a very limited manifestation, of that: a working out of that 'myth' on a particular level, at a particular time, in a particular set of historical circumstances. It is in that sense that one speaks of the myth of the FWBO. It is not that the FWBO possesses a myth: no! it is the myth that possesses the FWBO, you could say — in both senses of that term.

It is in that sense that the FWBO is working out, say, on the historical plane, something of archetypal, or archetypal/spiritual, significance. So if one can feel oneself, as a member of the FWBO, working out that myth, that will give one a much truer idea of what is actually happening or of what one is actually involved in. Subhuti's book²⁰ — this only just now occurs to me — with all its many virtues, does not bring out this aspect. Perhaps it is just as well that it does not, because it is maybe an aspect to which people outside the Movement need to be introduced gradually. Maybe it is an aspect which people within the Movement, even, do not fully grasp, but it is something that will need to be made more and more explicit as the years go by: something that will need to come more and more into people's consciousness — not something that they claim, as it were, but something that they actually feel to a greater and greater extent.

One needs to look at things in a completely different way: not just with the old rational, conceptual, historical-oriented consciousness, but in a more imaginative way, or a more archetypal way, to use that rather vague word. One might look at it with the help of the analogy of dreams. You have your waking life and you also have your dream life. In the case of some people, their dream life is very rich and vivid indeed, sometimes much more rich and vivid than their waking life. So if you are to give a total account of yourself, you must describe not only your waking life but also your dream life. But that may be very difficult to do, because you may not always remember your dream life; and very often, of course, your dream life does not remember your waking life. They go along, as it were, quite separately, occupying their different regions or

different planes.

In the same way as you might say that you individually have a dream life, the Movement as a whole has a dream life, and that is its myth, and though this still does not fully represent what is meant by the myth of the Movement, perhaps it goes some way towards it: that perhaps the Movement does have an existence on another level which also needs to be taken into account, just as you have an existence on another level, the dream level, that needs to be taken into account.

One might go even further. Supposing you were all not simply dreaming, but supposing you did a lot of meditation and spent most of your time at Vajraloka²¹ (*laughter*). Not very much might be happening on the material plane — you might not be moving about very much, or doing very much, or saying very much — but a lot would be happening on other levels, on the different levels of meditation. And that would be, one might say, where it was all really happening, and what you were doing externally would be just a faint reflection of that. In the same way, the Movement has its existence or its being on this other level which we call the mythical or, if you like, the archetypal or the symbolic, and is a sort of bodying forth of that. If it merely existed on the material plane, then it would probably wither away pretty quickly. It needs to have really deep roots — roots, so to speak, in the sky — if it is to survive at all. The *Bhagavad Gita*,²² by the way, since I used that figure of speech, does refer to the Asvattha tree, the banyan tree, which has its roots in the sky. Thus one needs to have one's roots in the sky instead of in the earth; and when one speaks of the myth of the FWBO one means something like this, that it has its roots in the sky, so one can't really understand it without reference to the sky.

Greg Shanks: Someone could initiate you, in a way, someone could get you to start looking at it in that way; but after that you would have to...

S.: I am not quite sure how you would go about it. I don't want to make it sound something cut and dried. It really does have to emerge, as different people start becoming aware that the Movement is more than it appears to be. And that will only happen when they start becoming aware that *they* are more than they appear to be, that they are more even than their dream life. They will become aware that they have a part to play, that they *are* playing a part, in that myth, on another level, and [that] their physical presence, their physical activity, is only a bodying forth of that. And then they will see that other people with whom they are connected are doing the same and in that way they will begin to appreciate the myth behind the FWBO as a whole. I think that will be the way in which they approach it.

Greg Shanks: This is what we've been saying recently about trying to live more on the mental plane.

S.: Yes, it does obviously imply becoming aware that you do in fact live on another plane; not that you have to live on another plane or ought to try to do so, but that in a sense you are already living on another plane, and have a being almost in another universe, in a way that you are not really aware of, though you may sometimes get a faint glimpse of it or be vaguely aware of it — that you are, as it were, somebody else; [that] you are not who you think you are; and that everybody is, in fact, 'somebody else', all wearing masks, so [that] it is like a sort of masquerade.

Mike Shaw: On the last question and answer session you said it is better to consider the universe as animate rather than inanimate, and suggested that if that were the case, the universe would have a sort of consciousness, which you implied would be ethical in nature. For instance, killing the Buddha couldn't be part of the nature of things. And in this lecture on the Bodhisattva Ideal you said first of all that we could consider the Bodhicitta as a sort of transcendental entity, and also as a sort of cosmic will in the universe in

the direction of Liberation. So I was wondering, first of all, if this universal consciousness might be equated with the Bodhicitta and, if not, would that mean that that consciousness was unEnlightened and could, so to speak, follow the Path to Enlightenment and gain the Bodhicitta?

S.: Certainly in Buddhism, traditionally, there is a conception of an Enlightened consciousness and an un-Enlightened consciousness, and the Enlightened consciousness, one could say, is especially embodied in the Bodhicitta and the Bodhisattva, and the un-Enlightened consciousness in the figure of Brahma. I did refer, I think, the other day, to a text in the *Majjhima-Nikāya* where Brahma is represented as pervading the whole universe with his metta. So when one speaks of the universe as being alive rather than dead, one is thinking of Brahma, say, rather than the Bodhisattva. Perhaps the Bodhisattva is also conscious of the universe by a sort of transcendental awareness, but that consciousness does not pertain to the universe in the same way that the consciousness of Brahma does. I am not quite sure how one would go about relating the two.

The image that occurs to me is of the ocean, which is more like Brahma's consciousness, but within that ocean there arises a spring of water which is not salt but fresh, and that is more like the Bodhisattva's consciousness — a stream as it were, within that ocean, rather than conterminous with the ocean. Though, contradictorily, you have to find some way of expressing the fact that the Bodhisattva is at the same time conscious of the universe. Perhaps one could say that Brahma is conscious of the universe but is not conscious of himself, whereas the Bodhisattva is not only conscious of the universe, he is conscious also of Brahma as within that universe. In other words, the Bodhisattva represents an even higher level, in this case a transcendental level.

You could say, to pursue this a little further, that a mundane consciousness, even like that of Brahma, constitutes in a way the life of an organism, the life of the world, the life of the universe, but that the Bodhisattva's consciousness, even though it is conscious of, say, the universe, is not its consciousness in the sense of contributing to keep it alive, but if anything rather the opposite, as constituting a way of deliverance from it. It is not a life principle. Brahma's consciousness, you might say, represents a sort of cosmic life principle, whereas the Bodhisattva's consciousness is not a life principle in that way but rather a liberation principle — liberation from conditioned life. So the Bodhisattva's consciousness is not constitutive of the universe, in the way that Brahma's apparently is.

Padmavajra: In your lecture *The Bodhisattva Principle*²³ you [suggest that] in the Bodhisattva the lower evolution becomes conscious, in the sense of the upward urge to Enlightenment. Would evolution then be that stream of fresh water within a wider [ocean]?

S.: One could look at it in that way, certainly. I think the difficulty is in using language which appears to suggest that one thing has come out of another in the sense of being nothing but that, so that it is reduced to that other. You then become guilty of a form of what is called reductionism. This is why in Buddhism we use the formula 'In dependence upon A, B arises', so one might say that in dependence upon the Lower Evolution, the Higher Evolution arises. We *do not* say that therefore the Higher Evolution is entirely the product of the Lower Evolution in the sense of being reducible to the Lower Evolution. It is not simply a more refined form of it, or anything like that. Not that it is completely different from it (that is the other extreme), because it has arisen in dependence upon it. So it is neither the same nor different. Thus there is no reductionism, nor is there the opposite of reductionism — whatever that is, if there is a word for it.

For instance, if you say that the Higher Evolution emerges from the Lower Evolution, it is as though you are suggesting that the Higher Evolution was contained within the Lower Evolution, rather like something being contained within a box, which you pull out at some stage or produce from the box. But it is not really like

that at all, in terms of Buddhist thought. Therefore, one needs to ponder very seriously this formula of 'In dependence upon A, B arises'; the two are not identical and at the same time they are not completely different.

Prasannasiddhi: So in dependence on the universe, on Brahma's consciousness or the consciousness of the universe, the Bodhisattva consciousness arises?

S.: No, I don't think one could say that, because the Bodhicitta arises in dependence upon the consciousness of the True Individual.* If one defined Brahma as a True Individual, one might say that Brahma, or a Brahma, could aspire to Bodhisattvahood, but one is getting perhaps then a little beyond the limits of traditional Buddhism. Brahma is more of a sort of cosmic principle, though he does appear in Buddhist texts as an individual in the sense of a sort of supernatural being. Obviously, it is not easy to express experiences and realities pertaining to a higher level of existence in terms of concepts derived from another level of existence. But I think one has to beware of a too literalistic approach, and one must therefore try to understand terms like Bodhicitta, Bodhisattva and so on in poetic and imaginative terms rather than in strictly literal or scientific terms — in other words, in terms of myth rather than in terms of history. Otherwise one finds oneself almost forced against one's will to give a sort of scientific explanation of a poem, or a scientific reason why a sonnet has fourteen lines, not twelve!



Glossary

Individual: sometimes 'True Individual'. In FWBO usage the individual is contrasted with the 'statistical' individual — a person merely distinguished from his fellows by virtue of having a separate body etc. The individual is thus not merely a group member, dominated by the conditioning of the group, although he may find himself in the midst of a group. He is not however a mere individualist, a powerful group member who dominates the group for his own selfish benefit. He is aware of himself as a separate centre of experience and action; he thinks and feels for himself; he takes responsibility for his own actions and is fully aware that his actions have consequences. The individual is emotionally positive and refined; he is creative, bringing to each situation a fresh awareness which is not limited by immediate circumstances; he is able to enter into deep friendships with others and to cooperate with them in common enterprises; he is able to keep faith both with his ideals and with his friends. He is not only self-aware, but he is aware in all respects — of the world around him, of other people, and to an extent of the Transcendental Reality which lies behind all things. To the extent that one has become an individual, separated from the undifferentiated mass of the group, then one can begin to develop upon the Path of the Higher Evolution.

The Venerable Sangharakshita used this term in order to try to find Western equivalents for traditional expressions of the Dharma. Depending on how rigorously it is used it can be applied to the healthy human being who is able to commit himself to the spiritual path or to the Stream-Entrant who, by virtue of his transcendental attainment, truly embodies the qualities of an individual.

Merit (Skt. *punya*, Pali *puñña*): Merit is the positive fruit of wholesome action. The principle of karma states that according to the state of mind with which it is performed every action of body, speech or mind has a consequence for the doer which is appropriate to it. Thus all acts performed from a wholesome mental state result in merit. The accumulation of merit gives rise to positive experiences including rebirth in happy states of existence.

It is also commonly held in Buddhism that one may transfer one's merits to others (c.f. 'The Transference of Merits and Self-surrender' in the 'Sevenfold Puja'). This guards against a materialistic attitude to ethics in which one is simply doing good in order to get benefits for oneself.

Traditionally, merit is seen almost as a stock which one can store up or give away — even in extreme cases sell! One should beware of such literalism whilst not denying that skilful deeds do build up a field of good fortune for the doer which may be very beneficial to him in providing him with a basis for his development — and for helping others.

Saṃskṛta (Pali *sankhata*): lit. 'compounded', 'confected', or 'put together'. According to the Abhidharma systems, reality can be divided into *saṃskṛta* and *asaṃskṛta dharmas* — *dharmas* being in this case the constituents of reality. All phenomena (i.e. the 'Five *Skandhas*', 'Twelve *Āyatanas*', and 'Eighteen *Dhātus*') are characterized by the fact that they can be indefinitely subdivided. They are thus 'put together' from other, smaller phenomena which are in their turn compounded of other, yet smaller things. Nirvana, by contrast, cannot be broken up in this way, being uncompounded. The description of Nirvana as *asaṃskṛta* should not, however, be taken too literally. It is not that it is a thing which only differs from other things in that it is impartite (even supposing an impartite thing were conceivable!) — it does not belong to the spatio-temporal order at all and should not therefore be thought of in terms which belong to that order, even though we must use words to talk about it which derive from spatiotemporal relations.

Sangha: lit. 'comprising', thus 'an assembly'. From being applied to any crowd or assembly of people, the word came to refer to the various groupings of wanderers (*parivrajaka*) in ancient India. In early Buddhism it acquired the more specific meaning of the Spiritual Community. In this sense, Sangha is the third of the Three Jewels of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, going for refuge to which makes one a Buddhist. Three usages of the term may be distinguished.

1. Within the Hinayana, the *Āryasangha* or 'fellowship of the Noble or Worthy' consists of all those who have attained Stream-Entry and beyond i.e. who have Transcendental Insight. Since they all share the same spiritual understanding, they dwell in mutual harmony and sympathy which goes far beyond ordinary good relations. An equivalent usage of Sangha within the Mahayana tradition is the 'Glorious Company of the Bodhisattvas'.
2. Sangha is sometimes taken in the Buddhist East to refer to the monastic community i.e. to an ecclesiastical body. This has come about as a consequence of the increasing split between monk and layman, the latter being relegated to the position of merely supporting the former, not being considered capable of personal efforts to develop.
3. The Western Buddhist Order rejects this narrow understanding of Sangha and has returned to what appears to have been the usage of the term in the Buddha's own time: the community of all those who have gone for refuge to the Three Jewels, whether leading a lay or a monastic life. Sometimes this is referred to as the *Mahāsaṅgha* or 'Great Sangha'. It is in this sense that the WBO is Sangha. It is neither lay nor monastic — all its members are fully committed to the Buddhist life whether living with their families or in single-sex communities.

Sangha connotes not merely a body of people but a special way of relating in which kindness, consideration, cooperation, encouragement, and inspiration are all blended on the basis of a shared perception of an Ideal, their commitment to which they have all given explicit and unequivocal public expression. It could be said that there is only Sangha when these qualities are present. When they are present between a number of people, permanently and to the highest possible degree, then the *Āryasangha* or company of Bodhisattvas has come into existence.

Trikāya: lit. 'three bodies'. This Mahayana doctrine, as fully elaborated by the Yogācārins, gives expression to the fact that the Buddha's nature can be experienced on many levels, according to the stage of development of the experiencer.

Three levels are distinguished as the 'three bodies' of the Buddha. They are not, of course, literally bodies, but the Buddha's nature as perceived by a more and more subtle awareness. For instance, on a much lower plane, we experience a person differently as we get to know them more deeply.

1. The lowest level is the *Nirmāṇakāya*, the 'Created Body' or 'Body of Transformation', in early texts referred to as the *Rūpakāya*, the 'Form Body'. This is the Buddha as perceived by the ordinary man with his five senses — the Buddha as an historical individual.
2. The *Sambhogakāya*, the 'Body of Mutual Enjoyment', 'Body of Bliss' or 'Glorious Body', is the Buddha as perceived by the visionary who has developed advanced meditative awareness. At this level the meditator sees not only the outward historical form but is in contact with the spiritual qualities which are the Buddha's deeper nature. The *Sambhogakāya* is the Buddha looked at with the eye of archetypal awareness and it is perceived in various ideal forms: the archetypal Buddhas

and Bodhisattvas such as Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī, Amitābha etc. They are seen on a visionary plane of very great beauty and their forms are as if made of pure light.

3. The *Dharmakāya*, the 'Body of Truth or Reality' or the 'Essential Body', is the Buddha seen with the eye of Transcendental Insight. The essential nature of the Buddha is Reality itself, Truth itself, and when one has awoken to Reality, to Truth this is what one sees.

See *A Survey of Buddhism* op. cit. p. 240ff and *The Three Jewels* op. cit. p. 35ff.

Notes

¹ Sangharakshita, *The Three Jewels*, Windhorse Publications.

² *Discourse on the Transcendentality of the Bodhicitta* referred to in Suzuki, D. T., *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism*, Schocken, New York 1970, pp. 297-9.

³ See for instance, Conze, Edward, *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development*, Cassirer, Oxford 1957, p. 14.

⁴ Avalokiteśvara, 'the Lord who looks down in compassion', is the archetypal Bodhisattva of Compassion. In this particular sutra, embodying the 'Perfection of Wisdom', the fact that Avalokiteśvara is the protagonist stresses the identity of Wisdom and Compassion.

⁵ Only recently published as *The Eternal Legacy: an Introduction to the Canonical Literature of Buddhism* Windhorse Publications.

⁶ For more information on this sutra see *The Eternal Legacy*, p. 222ff.

⁷ The Refuges are the traditional formula expressing commitment to the Three Jewels of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. The Precepts are the 'training principles' of abstaining from unskillful actions. There are various sets of precepts of which the Five and the Ten are used in the FWBO. For the Refuges, Precepts, and some 'invocations' of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, see *The FWBO Puja Book*, Windhorse Publications.

⁸ According to Buddhist tradition, there have been innumerable Buddhas in the past, both on earth and in other dimensions of space. In the Pali texts 27 Buddhas are mentioned as having lived and taught on earth before 'our' Buddha, Gautama Śākyamuni. A Buddha only appears after all trace of the Dharma of the previous Buddha has disappeared. For more details see Sangharakshita, *A Survey of Buddhism*, Windhorse Publications.

⁹ *Tathāgata* is a very common epithet for a Buddha – perhaps even more common in all scriptures than the term Buddha. It is understood variously as the 'Thus Gone One' (i.e. gone to Nirvana) or the 'Thus Come One' (i.e. come to the world in Compassion).

¹⁰ For the life of the Buddha see Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu, *The Life of the Buddha*, Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy 1978. For the life of Milarepa see Lhalungpa, Lobsang P. *The Life of Milarepa*, Dutton, New York 1977.

¹¹ The *Āryasangha* or 'Sangha of the Noble or Worthy' is the Spiritual Community at its very highest level, consisting of all those who have passed the point of no return — i.e. all those in whom Transcendental Insight has become the dominant force.

¹² Thurman, Robert A. F., *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakīrti*, Pennsylvania University, University Park and London 1976, p. 12. Thurman, Robert A. F., *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakīrti*, Pennsylvania University, University Park and London 1976, p. 12.

¹³ The Avataṃsaka School or *Hua-yen-tsung* of China based itself upon the *Avataṃsaka Sutra* which stresses the interpenetration of every element of the world with every other. For details of the school see Ch'en, Kenneth, *Buddhism in China*, Princeton University, Princeton 1973, p. 313ff. For details of the Avataṃsaka Sutra see *The Eternal Legacy* op. cit. p. 221.

¹⁴ The 'Five *Skandhas*', 'Twelve *Āyatanas*', and 'Eighteen *Dhātus*' are a traditional set of lists which are taken as together summing up the conditioned universe. The 'Five *Skandhas*', 'groups' or 'heaps' comprise all aspects of the person, psychological and physical. The 'Twelve *Āyatanas*' or 'sense spheres' are the six internal and six external aspects of the senses — i.e. the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind (the sixth sense in Buddhist psychology) as the inner and sights, sounds, smells, tastes, sensations of touch, and mental objects such as memory, fantasy etc. as the outer. The 'Eighteen *Dhātus*' or 'elements' are the 'Twelve *Āyatanas*' plus the six consciousnesses associated with each sense i.e. eye, sights, and visual consciousness etc.

¹⁵ One very famous depiction of the archetypal Bodhisattva of Compassion shows him with a thousand arms, stretching out in a kind of aura about his body, and eleven heads piled in four tiers on his shoulders. It is said that the Bodhisattva once made a vow that if he should for one moment falter in his efforts to save living beings then his body should burst into fragments. One day he did waver and instantly his body disintegrated. The Buddha Amitābha reassembled the shattered pieces, providing him with the thousand arms in order to reach out to help ever more beings and eleven heads to search out suffering in all the directions of space.

¹⁶ The Bodhisattva's vow is the expression of the Bodhicitta once it has arisen. Fundamentally it is a vow to devote one's life to helping other beings, although there are many specific formulations of the vow. The vow will be dealt with in detail in *Mitratas* 5 and 6 of this series.

¹⁷ Sangharakshita, *The Endlessly Fascinating Cry: An Exploration of the Bodhicaryāvatāra*, Windhorse, London 1977. Available on FreeBuddhistAudio - <http://tinyurl.com/nt4tyke> - or Lulu - <http://tinyurl.com/p44mlzq>

¹⁸ The *Sukhāvātī-vyūha Sūtra* describes the Pure Land or ideal world created by the Buddha Amitābha. In a previous incarnation, when the Bodhicitta arose in him, he vowed that when he became a Buddha he would dwell in a realm in which all conditions were favourable to the practising of the Dharma. All who wish to be reborn there simply have to recite his name with sincere faith. See *The Eternal Legacy*, op. cit. p. 170ff, and *A Survey of Buddhism*, op. cit. p. 330ff.

¹⁹ The Swiss C. G. Jung (1875-1961) was the first of the modern psychologists to recognize the greater depths of the mind. He taught that dreams and myths may give expression to psychic truths which come from a level of consciousness which is collective not individual. For an introduction to his thinking see, for instance, Jung, Carl G., et al., *Man and His Symbols*, Aldus, London 1964.

²⁰ Subhuti, Dharmachari, (Alex Kennedy), *Buddhism for Today: Portrait of a new Buddhist Movement*, Element, Tisbury 1983.

²¹ Vajraloka is the FWBO's intensive meditation centre in North Wales. All Order Members and Mitras are encouraged to spend at least one week there each year. See www.vajraloka.org

²² The *Bhagavad Gita* is a classic of Hindu literature, being a part of the heroic cycle, the *Mahābhārata*.

²³ Sangharakshita, *The Bodhisattva Principle*, Tape Lecture no. 157, Dharmachakra, London 1983, published as *The Bodhisattva: Evolution and Transcendence*, Windhorse, London 1983.